

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Berkley Square Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Area bounded by Byrnes Ave, D St, Leonard Ave and G St ☐ not for publication

city or town Las Vegas ☐ vicinity

state Nevada code NV county Clark code 003 zip code 89106

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register

☐ removed from the National
Register

☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Berkley Square
Name of Property

Clark County, NV
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
95	53	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
95	53	Total

(148 residences, 35 accessory structures)

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Ranch style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT/clay tile

walls WOOD/board and batten, clapboard

STUCCO

SYNTHETICS/permastone

METAL/aluminum siding

Other METAL

Narrative Description See Continuation Sheet

Berkley Square
Name of Property

Clark County, NV
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

Period of Significance

1949-1955

Significant Dates

1949 – Paul R. Williams hired to design subdivision

1954-1955 – Dates of construction

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Thomas L. Berkley

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Paul R. Williams, Architect

Burke & Wyatt, Builders

Narrative Statement of Significance See Continuation Sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References – See Continuation Sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☒ University University of Nevada at Las Vegas
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Nevada State Museum & Historical Society, Las Vegas

Berkley Square
Name of Property

Clark County, NV
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 30 acres

UTM References

Beginning at NW corner and continuing clockwise:

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	UTM 11	666266E	4006624N	3	UTM 11	666668E 4006287N
2	UTM 11	666644E	4006609N	4	UTM 11	666307E 4006280N

☐ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description See Continuation Sheet

Boundary Justification See Continuation Sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Diana J. Painter, Owner/Principal

organization Painter Preservation & Planning

date August 2007

street & number 2685 A Petaluma Blvd. N.

telephone 707-658-0184

city or town Petaluma

state CA

zip code 94952

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. (see attached)

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. (see attached)

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property. (see attached)

Additional items

CRM Journal Article: "Rediscovering a Las Vegas Neighborhood's African American Roots"

Las Vegas Sun Article: "History Takes Note of What Black Achievement Built"

SUDA Strategic Urban Development Alliance LLC, "Remembering Thomas L. Berkley"

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Various

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state ____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places**
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada***Narrative Description – Summary***

The Berkley Square subdivision, located in the area known historically as Las Vegas' Westside, is made up of 148 contemporary Ranch-style homes designed by architect Paul R. Williams and constructed in 1954-55. It was laid out according to Federal Housing Administration standards, and retains that street and block pattern today. Its layout, governed by FHA standards, exhibits the concern for traffic and pedestrian safety at the time with its limited the external access points and separated sidewalks. The siting, with shallow front yards, and deeper, more generous rear yards, is consistent with the new residential patterns being implemented at the time, which focused family and neighborhood activity in the back yards. The homes themselves display the clean lines of a Contemporary Ranch house and have open, integral carports. They display some of the materials of the classic Ranch house, including board and batten and clapboard siding. The windows, which are largely intact, are particularly attractive, with six lights, steel frames and muntins, and a combination of fixed and casement sash.

There are 148 homes in Berkley Square today, as there was historically. Additionally, there are 35 accessory structures, which are considered non-contributing buildings, as there were no accessory structures in the original subdivision. A typical renovation is to enclose the carport for a garage or additional room. It is very rare, overall, for a large scale renovation to have occurred in Berkley Square. Many changes to the homes have been relatively minor, with the exception noted above, and often home owners used a similar design vocabulary and/or materials that were already present in the subdivision. A summary of contributing and non-contributing structures follows.

PRIMARY RESOURCES	
Historic Contributing buildings	95
Historic Non-contributing buildings	35
TOTAL RESOURCES	148
PERCENTAGE CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES	64%

The Berkley Square subdivision has good integrity. The subdivision itself, as a typical product of the FHA in the post-war years, has excellent integrity. The street, block and lot patterns, as well as sidewalks and building setbacks, are nearly completely intact. The homes themselves have good integrity. The most common change is the enclosure of the carport as a garage or additional room. Most of the other changes to the homes occurred in the back, which is not visible from any public right-of-way. Many of the changes that did occur to the buildings were done in the prevalent architectural vocabulary and/or materials already present in the subdivision. The windows, a distinctive and particularly attractive aspect of the homes in the subdivision, are surprisingly intact and distinguish these homes from similar tract homes of the era. The homes as a whole appear to be in good condition.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

Location and Setting

Berkley Square is located in what is northwest Las Vegas today, historically known as the Westside and now called West Las Vegas. It is west of the Union Pacific railroad tracks and north of the McWilliams Original Las Vegas Townsite (1904). It is north of and adjacent to two tracts that opened in 1924, H.F.M. & M. Tract and Valley View Tract. The survey area includes the entire subdivision as originally designed in 1949 and recorded in 1954. This includes the lots to either side of Byrnes Avenue, Wyatt Avenue, Freeman Avenue and Leonard Avenue between D and H Streets.

The topography is flat. Berkley Square and Las Vegas as a whole is set within a basin nearly surrounded by mountains. To the west are the Spring Mountains; to the east is Sunrise Mountain; and to the north is the Desert Mountain Wildlife Range. The urban context is as follows.

Berkley Square is connected to surrounding arterial streets at Freeman Avenue and D Street; Byrnes Avenue and H Street; and Owens Avenue and F Street. Owens Avenue is a major west-bound arterial, and is coupled with the east-bound Harrison. The subdivision's main entry is Owens Avenue and F Street, which is flanked at this point by a vacant lot, a housing development, and a commercial building.

The subdivision is surrounded on the west, north and east primarily by housing that developed in largely the same time frame. To the south is a relatively sparse mix of commercial and residential development. Kit Carson Elementary School is located to the northeast; a major commercial development is to the southwest; a park, community center and library is located to the northwest; and the elevated Union Pacific Railroad tracks and Bonanza Underpass is slightly farther east.

Platting and Development

Although Berkley Square was eventually sponsored by the Veteran's Administration, it was conceived as a Federal Housing Administration (FHA) project and displays the design characteristics of an FHA subdivision. The FHA influenced the design of subdivisions and homes across the country, as it was required that a bank, before lending money to a real-estate developer, obtain FHA approval. This gave the FHA an opportunity to advise developers and oversee development standards and processes.¹ The Land Planning Division of the FHA was established in 1934. They developed design standards and provided design services, as well as oversight of development projects.

Among the concepts promoted by the FHA were curved streets, looping streets, and short cul-de-sacs intended to slow traffic and protect children. Differentiated circulation – that is, the superblock concept with only a few external access points – was intended to reduce the volume of traffic in a subdivision. This is reflected in the design of Berkley Square, which accesses external arterials at only three points.

¹ Newton, 643.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

The subdivisions were to include parks, schools and commercial development. Pedestrian safety was a primary concern and it was a common practice to separate automobile and pedestrian traffic. This is reflected in Berkley Square with the system of sidewalks separated from the street with planting strips..

The City of Las Vegas began correspondence with the Federal Housing Administration on the planned Berkley Square subdivision, then known as Westside Park, in 1947. At that time the FHA suggested that the 30-acre parcel be platted for 158 lots. Covenants were suggested to govern land use, building height and site areas, setbacks, fences and landscaping, architectural design, minimum floor area, and utilities. Sidewalks were to be a minimum of 4 feet, and streets were to be 36 feet paved curb-to-curb. The covenants were to be in effect for a minimum of 25 years.

The subdivision was finally recorded May 27, 1954. The recorded owners were Edward A. Freeman and J. J. Byrnes. Covenants for the 148-lot subdivision were recorded May 28, 1954 and amended December 29, 1954. At that time it was called Berkley Square, and the project was sponsored by the Veterans' Administration. Architectural controls were in place, including controls on the placement of fences. Freeman, Byrnes and Wyatt were named as the architectural control committee, and established a process for review of proposals.

Although the architectural controls have been lifted and a few property owners have developed structures (primarily new carports) in the front setback, the overall urban design qualities of the subdivision have remained intact. The streets are broad, with two traffic lanes and parking on either side. Sidewalks are separated from the street with a planting strip. There are no regular street trees, but there are mature trees in some front yards.

The majority of buildings are set back from the street as they were historically, and so define the streetscape in a regular pattern of building frontages. As mentioned, the most common change is enclosing the open carport. This has some effect on the overall urban design qualities, as the lot is slightly less open in feel than it was historically (although many homes have storage in the back of the carport, so the backyard is not visible from the street). The other major change is that most property owners have fenced their front yards, which was prohibited in early years. Many have cyclone fences or have wrought iron fences between brick piers, so transparency is maintained. It is not common for fences to be solid, although some have low, concrete block fences topped with decorative concrete block, which also maintain some transparency from the street. Thus the urban design characteristics of the subdivision are largely intact.

Architectural Design

The houses of Berkley Square are Contemporary Style Ranch Houses. Alan Hess defines the character-defining features of the Ranch House in general as follows. It is a one-story house with a low-pitched, gabled or hipped roof, with wide eaves; of general asymmetry with a horizontal emphasis; an open-interior plan blending functional spaces; strong connections to the outside; with informal or rustic

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

materials or details; and a plan that is rambling and suggestive of wings or additions.² A Ranch house may also have a long shallow at-grade entry porch, redolent of the *corredor* of the traditional Ranch home which inspired it. Family activity occurs in the backyard and parking is typically in the front.

In contrast, the earlier Minimal Traditional style tends to have a square footprint, symmetrical features, a more vertically-oriented fenestration pattern, and a small overhang over the door. Many Minimal Traditional developments still have the small parking garage to the rear of the lot, a pattern that was popularized in developments in the early part of the century.

The homes of Berkley Square borrow features from both of these modern styles – perhaps reflecting the fact that they were designed in the late 1940s - plus displaying some features unique to the subdivision. They display the building form and internal organization of the Ranch house, but massing is simple and they offer the clear composition and clean lines of early modern architectural influences. The most unique character-defining features of the homes are the windows. They have multiple lights, steel frames, and a combination of casement and fixed sashes. The focal windows are nearly square with a slight vertical or slight horizontal emphasis, and six lights of varying sizes and proportions. This latter feature is in contrast to the tract Ranch house, lending it a unique sense of style that aligns it more closely with earlier Ranch homes or Minimal Traditional homes.

House Models

There are two house models in the Berkley Square project, based on façade design. They all have rectangular footprints, and are sited relatively close to the front property line. They all display the same front and side-yard setbacks, and thus had the same relationship to the street and sidewalk, and the same open space in the rear yard. All homes originally had a carport on the left hand side of the house, and by covenant none had front yard fences in the first 25 years.

They were varied by adding a hip roof with the ridge parallel to the street, or side gable roof (this could occur on either model) They are also varied by having a wide or narrow overhang over the door. Overhangs were an extension of the main roof. Additionally, they are varied by the fenestration pattern of the front façade and by exterior finishes. All houses had steel frame windows with fixed and casement sash on the front façade.

Model A	Model B	Unknown	Total
76	59	13	148
52%	40%	8%	100%

The two fenestration patterns are as follows.³ Model A has an asymmetrical façade with two

² Hess, *Ranch House*, 17.

³ These model numbers are assigned in this report, and are not related to any plans prepared at the time.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 9 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

horizontally-oriented windows to the right of the slightly offset entry. The window to the left of the entry has a horizontal orientation as well. Both windows on the right have three lights and casement sash. The one on the far right is slightly wider. The window on the left has six lights – three across and two down - with casement sash. There is a large central light on the bottom. The casement sash is on the lower left hand side. Below is a photograph of a typical Model A house.



Model A house

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 10 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

Model B has an asymmetrical façade with a slightly offset entry as well. The window to the right of the door is the same window as that on the Model A that occurs to the left of the door. The window on the left side of the door has the same arrangement of lights, but is vertically rather than horizontally oriented. Below is a photograph of a typical Model B house.



Model B house

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 11 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

All Berkley Square houses originally had carports. These carports were on the left side of the house and were open, supported by square wood posts. The side gable houses had open truss-work in the gable in the carport. The hip roof houses had exposed rafters in the carport. Typically the carports had a storage area to the rear. Below is a characteristic arrangement of windows and doors leading to the carport.



Typical carport

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 12 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

The most common change to the houses in Berkeley Square is enclosing the carport for an additional room on the left side of the house. Below is a photograph of a house in which this was done. This is the most characteristic way in which these carports were enclosed. The typical two-light window on the left, on a room that replaced the carport, would likely meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties if the building was renovated today.



Typical renovation to Berkley Square house with garage enclosed and two-part window

Integrity

The subdivision. The Berkley Square subdivision has excellent integrity. It displays the original platting pattern as designed in 1949 and recorded in 1954, including the street layout, block and lot patterns, and street cross section, including sidewalks and planting strip. All homes as constructed in 1954-55 are extant. Very few have been extended into the front yard setback, so the street section as defined by the building facades remains intact. Most side yard setbacks are also intact (because Berkley Square displays the typical post-war development pattern of relatively narrow side yard and front yard setbacks, most additions have been made to the rear of the house and are not visible).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 13 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

The majority of the homes also retain the concrete driveway to the left side of the lot. The most common alteration to the front yard is the addition of a fence, although many of the fences are 'transparent' (ie cyclone or wrought iron) and in this respect, the streetscape retains the open feel that it had historically, when fences were not allowed by deed restriction. The subdivision as a whole retains not only its integrity as constructed, but its integrity as originally designed.

The homes. The integrity of the homes in Berkley Square is good. The homes are designed in the Contemporary Style Ranch House (a term coined by Alan Hess in *Ranch House*), and have clean, uncluttered lines and the basic characteristics of a tract Ranch House, with the exception of the focal windows, which display some unique characteristics.

Almost all the homes retain the original building envelope, as viewed from the sidewalk and public street. Very few have had second story additions or been extended into the front or side yards. The most common addition is to the rear. Many home owners have added a covered patio, but some have constructed additional rooms as well. As these are on the rear of the house and there are no alleys, they are not visible from any public right-of-way.

The most common change to the homes as viewed from the public right-of-way has been to enclose the previously open carport for an integral garage or additional room. These changes typically respect the building envelope. In and of itself this change has not been considered dramatic enough to make the resource non-contributing, provided that any new openings are in an architectural vocabulary compatible with the original design of the house. In other words, if the carport was enclosed and a horizontally-oriented, aluminum-frame sliding sash window added, the house is still considered contributing to the overall District. If an incompatible opening was added, the house is considered non-contributing.

Other changes to the homes, typically minor, have tended to be within the architectural vocabulary of the subdivision or of the contemporary Ranch home in general. Examples include the addition of a veneer or contrasting material below the windows, the addition of shutters, or new porch supports.

Summary. The Berkley Square subdivision is significant as a good example of an FHA subdivision, among other areas of significance. It retains integrity of location, design and setting with respect to this area of significance. It is in the same location and its setting is largely intact as well, the surrounding areas having been also developed in the post-war years. The circulation patterns surrounding the subdivision are also intact as designed. The design of the subdivision today, evidenced by circulation, block and lot patterns, is the same as when constructed in the mid-1950s. House placement and setbacks are also largely intact.

The design features of the homes are intact, including window openings and actual window frames and muntins. Where the carport has been enclosed, it is largely within the existing envelope and displays openings compatible with the rest of the house. The roof lines, porches, finishes and special features of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 14 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

the houses, such as porch supports, are largely intact. Some finishes and features have been altered, but new features are often within the original vocabulary of the subdivision. Thus the design of the homes, as well as the materials and workmanship, retains integrity.

The feeling, defined as the cumulative effect of setting, design, materials, and workmanship, is intact. Association is also intact, in that the neighborhood retains the appearance it had when designed and financed by African Americans for the African American community in West Las Vegas. The neighborhood residents are still largely African American, and many of the homes remain in the family that originally purchased them in the mid-1950s.

Contributing/Non-contributing. Whether homes were considered Contributing or Non-contributing to the historic district was determined as follows. The composition of the front façade is the most important aspect of the houses, as rear of the houses is not visible. Thus additions to the rear that were not visible from the front façade did not affect the contributory status of the house.

The most common change to the homes is enclosing the carport. This was not considered detrimental, as it typically occurs within the same footprint and does not detract from the overall appearance of the front façade. If a new window was added that was in the architectural vocabulary of the subdivision – typically an aluminum-frame sliding window – then the change was considered acceptable. However, if a secondary entry or garage door was added, this rendered the house non-contributing, as it changed the general access to the home. If a new carport was added to the front of the house and it was a temporary metal structure, this was considered reversible and therefore acceptable.

Other changes that were acceptable included an alteration of a window if the proportions were maintained and the window was in the existing vocabulary of the house. Similarly, if cladding was added that was typical of the subdivision, such as a brick or permastone veneer under the windows, this was considered acceptable. However, if the house was fully re-clad *and* some windows changed *and* the porch supports altered, these cumulative changes rendered the house Non-contributing. In other words, one-to-two minor changes were considered acceptable; major changes or many small changes were considered unacceptable.

Previous Surveys

The Berkley Square subdivision was surveyed in 2005. No previous surveys of the subdivision had been conducted, although it was ‘discovered’ when a focused survey of West Las Vegas was conducted in 2002. The 2005 survey concluded with the recommendation that the subdivision be nominated to the National Register for the following reasons:

- for its role in the redevelopment of Las Vegas’ Westside and housing for the African-American community in the period leading up the Civil Rights era, and therefore an important aspect of local history, particularly ethnic history;
-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 15 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

- as the first minority-built subdivision in the State of Nevada;⁴
- for its association with civil rights leader Thomas L. Berkley, who was a financier for the subdivision and for which the subdivision is named;
- and its association with the African American architect Paul R. Williams, who had a national reputation as a designer and as an African-American in a field in which African Americans had not traditionally been recognized.

List of properties in Berkley Square

The following is a list of the resources in Berkley Square, along with a notation as to whether they are contributing or non-contributing to the proposed National Register Historic District. In general, major changes to the building façade or massing render them non-contributing. Minor changes include enclosing the carport, as long as the vocabulary of openings is consistent with that of the design of homes as a whole. Changes to the windows, because they are an important character-defining aspect of the homes, render a home non-contributing.

List of properties

St. No.	Street	Parcel	Year	Acres	Model	C/NC
500	BYRNES	13922410022	1955	0.14486	Model A	Contributing
501	BYRNES	13922410128	1954	0.15474	Model A	Non-contributing
504	BYRNES	13922410023	1955	0.13722	Model B	Contributing
505	BYRNES	13922410129	1954	0.14715	Model B	Contributing
508	BYRNES	13922410024	1955	0.13679	Model A	Contributing
509	BYRNES	13922410130	1954	0.14736	Model A	Contributing
512	BYRNES	13922410025	1955	0.14100	Model B	Contributing
513	BYRNES	13922410131	1954	0.15007	Model A	Non-contributing
516	BYRNES	13922410026	1955	0.15054	Unknown	Non-contributing
517	BYRNES	13922410132	1954	0.15109	Model B	Contributing
520	BYRNES	13922410027	1955	0.14050	Unknown	Contributing
521	BYRNES	13922410133	1954	0.15166	Model A	Contributing
524	BYRNES	13922410028	1955	0.14313	Model B	Contributing
525	BYRNES	13922410134	1954	0.15367	Model B	Non-contributing
600	BYRNES	13922410029	1955	0.14540	Model A	Non-contributing
601	BYRNES	13922410135	1954	0.15022	Unknown	Non-contributing

⁴ *Las Vegas Review-Journal* on April 16, 1954.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 16 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

604	BYRNES	13922410030	1955	0.14755	Model A	Contributing
605	BYRNES	13922410136	1954	0.15201	Model A	Contributing
608	BYRNES	13922410031	1955	0.14835	Model B	Contributing
612	BYRNES	13922410032	1955	0.15732	Model A	Contributing
616	BYRNES	13922410033	1955	0.15757	Unknown	Contributing
620	BYRNES	13922410034	1955	0.16340	Model B	Contributing
1644	D	13922410010	1955	0.15051	Model A	Non-contributing
1648	D	13922410009	1955	0.13707	Model A	Contributing
1654	D	13922410008	1955	0.13995	Model B	Non-contributing
1658	D	13922410007	1955	0.13702	Model A	Contributing
1662	D	13922410006	1955	0.13809	Model A	Contributing
1666	D	13922410005	1955	0.13762	Model B	Contributing
1670	D	13922410004	1955	0.13878	Model A	Non-contributing
1674	D	13922410003	1955	0.14689	Model A	Contributing
1678	D	13922410002	1955	0.15934	Model B	Contributing
1682	D	13922410001	1955	0.18474	Model A	Non-contributing
1642	E	13922410100	1954	0.14639	Model A	Non-contributing
1643	E	13922410011	1955	0.15339	Model B	Contributing
1647	E	13922410012	1955	0.14225	Model A	Non-contributing
1653	E	13922410013	1955	0.14180	Model B	Contributing
1654	E	13922410124	1954	0.14144	Unknown	Non-contributing
1657	E	13922410014	1955	0.13974	Model A	Non-contributing
1661	E	13922410015	1955	0.13990	Model A	Non-contributing
1664	E	13922410126	1954	0.16643	Model B	Non-contributing
1665	E	13922410016	1955	0.13986	Unknown	Non-contributing
1669	E	13922410017	1955	0.14466	Model A	Contributing
1673	E	13922410018	1955	0.19030	Model B	Contributing
1676	E	13922410127	1954	0.18463	Model B	Contributing
1677	E	13922410019	1955	0.26434	Model B	Contributing
1683	E	13922410020	1955	0.21283	Unknown	Non-contributing
1687	E	13922410021	1955	0.15210	Unknown	Contributing
1600	F	13922410056	1954	0.15430	Model A	Contributing
1601	F	13922410057	1954	0.15413	Model B	Non-contributing
401	FREEMAN	13922410099	1954	0.17198	Model B	Non-contributing
405	FREEMAN	13922410098	1954	0.15082	Model A	Contributing
409	FREEMAN	13922410097	1954	0.15413	Model B	Contributing
413	FREEMAN	13922410096	1954	0.15587	Model B	Contributing
417	FREEMAN	13922410095	1954	0.16048	Model A	Non-contributing
420	FREEMAN	13922410101	1954	0.15497	Unknown	Non-contributing
421	FREEMAN	13922410094	1954	0.15642	Model B	Non-contributing
500	FREEMAN	13922410102	1954	0.15440	Model A	Non-contributing

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 17 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

501	FREEMAN	13922410093	1954	0.15238	Unknown	Contributing
504	FREEMAN	13922410103	1954	0.15287	Model B	Contributing
505	FREEMAN	13922410092	1954	0.15772	Model A	Contributing
508	FREEMAN	13922410104	1954	0.15004	Model A	Contributing
509	FREEMAN	13922410091	1954	0.15922	Model B	Contributing
512	FREEMAN	13922410105	1954	0.15193	Model A	Non-contributing
513	FREEMAN	13922410090	1954	0.15437	Model A	Contributing
516	FREEMAN	13922410106	1954	0.15444	Model B	Contributing
517	FREEMAN	13922410089	1954	0.14859	Model B	Non-contributing
520	FREEMAN	13922410107	1954	0.15641	Model A	Contributing
521	FREEMAN	13922410088	1954	0.14861	Model B	Contributing
524	FREEMAN	13922410108	1954	0.15561	Model B	Contributing
525	FREEMAN	13922410087	1954	0.15845	Model A	Contributing
600	FREEMAN	13922410109	1954	0.15261	Unknown	Non-contributing
601	FREEMAN	13922410086	1954	0.15478	Model B	Contributing
604	FREEMAN	13922410110	1954	0.15495	Model A	Contributing
605	FREEMAN	13922410085	1954	0.15804	Model A	Contributing
1616	G	13922410049	1954	0.18257	Model B	Non-contributing
1620	G	13922410048	1954	0.14051	Model A	Contributing
1624	G	13922410047	1954	0.15070	Model B	Contributing
1625	G	13922410082	1954	0.16289	Model A	Contributing
1628	G	13922410046	1954	0.14937	Model B	Contributing
1631	G	13922410083	1954	0.16232	Model B	Non-contributing
1632	G	13922410045	1954	0.14960	Model A	Contributing
1635	G	13922410084	1954	0.16082	Unknown	Non-contributing
1636	G	13922410044	1954	0.15158	Model B	Contributing
1640	G	13922410043	1954	0.14915	Model A	Contributing
1643	G	13922410111	1954	0.16584	Model B	Contributing
1644	G	13922410042	1954	0.15136	Model A	Contributing
1649	G	13922410112	1954	0.15371	Model A	Non-contributing
1650	G	13922410041	1954	0.14966	Model B	Non-contributing
1653	G	13922410113	1954	0.16563	Model A	Contributing
1654	G	13922410040	1954	0.15139	Model A	Contributing
1658	G	13922410039	1954	0.15209	Model A	Contributing
1662	G	13922410038	1954	0.15293	Model B	Non-contributing
1665	G	13922410139	1954	0.16255	Model A	Non-contributing
1666	G	13922410037	1954	0.15092	Model A	Contributing
1669	G	13922410138	1954	0.15395	Model A	Non-contributing
1670	G	13922410036	1954	0.15403	Model A	Contributing
1673	G	13922410137	1954	0.16349	Model B	Contributing
1674	G	13922410035	1954	0.17250	Model B	Contributing

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 18 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

400	LEONARD	13922410067	1954	0.16780	Model B	Contributing
401	LEONARD	13922410066	1954	0.16871	Model A	Contributing
404	LEONARD	13922410068	1954	0.14793	Model A	Contributing
405	LEONARD	13922410065	1954	0.14817	Model B	Non-contributing
408	LEONARD	13922410069	1954	0.15139	Model A	Contributing
409	LEONARD	13922410064	1954	0.15506	Model A	Contributing
412	LEONARD	13922410070	1954	0.15351	Model B	Contributing
413	LEONARD	13922410063	1954	0.15062	Model B	Contributing
416	LEONARD	13922410071	1954	0.15558	Model A	Non-contributing
417	LEONARD	13922410062	1954	0.15313	Model A	Contributing
420	LEONARD	13922410072	1954	0.14987	Model B	Non-contributing
421	LEONARD	13922410061	1954	0.15236	Model A	Contributing
500	LEONARD	13922410073	1954	0.15113	Model A	Non-contributing
501	LEONARD	13922410060	1954	0.14835	Model B	Non-contributing
504	LEONARD	13922410074	1954	0.15409	Model A	Non-contributing
505	LEONARD	13922410059	1954	0.15432	Model A	Contributing
508	LEONARD	13922410075	1954	0.15649	Model B	Contributing
509	LEONARD	13922410058	1954	0.15054	Model A	Non-contributing
512	LEONARD	13922410076	1954	0.15154	Model A	Contributing
516	LEONARD	13922410077	1954	0.14270	Model A	Contributing
520	LEONARD	13922410078	1954	0.14544	Model A	Contributing
524	LEONARD	13922410079	1954	0.15401	Model A	Non-contributing
525	LEONARD	13922410055	1954	0.15344	Model B	Contributing
600	LEONARD	13922410080	1954	0.15046	Model B	Contributing
601	LEONARD	13922410054	1954	0.15217	Model B	Contributing
604	LEONARD	13922410081	1954	0.15205	Model B	Non-contributing
605	LEONARD	13922410053	1954	0.15192	Model A	Contributing
609	LEONARD	13922410052	1954	0.15321	Model B	Contributing
613	LEONARD	13922410051	1954	0.14948	Model A	Contributing
617	LEONARD	13922410050	1954	0.13233	Model A	Contributing
418	WYATT	13922410125	1954	0.18250	Model A	Non-contributing
421	WYATT	13922410123	1954	0.15012	Model A	Contributing
500	WYATT	13922410148	1954	0.15660	Model B	Non-contributing
501	WYATT	13922410122	1954	0.14937	Model B	Contributing
504	WYATT	13922410147	1954	0.15317	Model A	Contributing
505	WYATT	13922410121	1954	0.14790	Model A	Non-contributing
508	WYATT	13922410146	1954	0.15190	Model A	Contributing
509	WYATT	13922410120	1954	0.14570	Model A	Non-contributing
512	WYATT	13922410145	1954	0.15519	Model B	Contributing
513	WYATT	13922410119	1954	0.14757	Model A	Non-contributing
516	WYATT	13922410144	1954	0.15468	Model A	Contributing

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 19 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

517	WYATT	13922410118	1954	0.15128	Model A	Contributing
520	WYATT	13922410143	1954	0.15354	Model B	Contributing
521	WYATT	13922410117	1954	0.15430	Model B	Contributing
524	WYATT	13922410142	1954	0.15351	Unknown	Non-contributing
525	WYATT	13922410116	1954	0.15314	Model B	Non-contributing
600	WYATT	13922410141	1954	0.15226	Model A	Contributing
601	WYATT	13922410115	1954	0.14962	Model A	Contributing
604	WYATT	13922410140	1954	0.15239	Model B	Non-contributing
605	WYATT	13922410114	1954	0.15234	Model B	Non-contributing

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 20 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

Statement of Significance - Summary

Berkley Square is significant under Criterion A as the first minority-built subdivision in Nevada, as reported in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* on April 16, 1954. It is also significant for its role in the redevelopment of Las Vegas' Westside and provision of housing for the African-American community in the period leading up to the Civil Rights era. Berkley Square was one of the new housing developments in Las Vegas designed to improve living conditions for the city's African American community, thus representing strides that had been made as a result of community activism in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is therefore an important aspect of local history, particularly ethnic history.

The subdivision is important under Criterion B for its association with one of its financiers, Thomas L. Berkley of Oakland, an African American attorney, media owner (*The Oakland Post, El Mundo*), developer, and civil rights advocate in the Bay Area and beyond. Finally it is significant under Criterion C for its association with the architect, Paul R. Williams, an internationally-known African-American architect from Los Angeles who made great strides for his race in the profession. The homes represent good examples of the Contemporary Style Ranch House and the subdivision is a good example of development designed under the auspices of the Federal Housing Administration's standards of the 1940s. It is additionally representative of the massive building boom that took place in Las Vegas and across the country in the post-war era, and retains good integrity as a residential suburb of that time.

The Areas of Significance for Berkley Square are Architecture, Community Planning and Development, and Ethnic Heritage. The Period of Significance is 1949, when it was announced that Paul R. Williams would be designing the subdivision, to 1955, when the last house was constructed. The subdivision is significant at the local level.

Historical Background

Berkley Square is the first minority-built subdivision in Nevada, as reported in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* on April 16, 1954: "This is the first minority group subdivision to be approved for construction in the state of Nevada."⁵ It was designed by the architect, Paul R. Williams, an internationally-known African American architect from Los Angeles who made great strides for his race in the profession. It was financed in part by Thomas L. Berkley of Oakland, a prominent African American attorney, media owner, developer, and civil rights advocate. It was also financed by Edward A. Freeman and J. J. Byrnes of Los Angeles. The developer was Leonard A. Wilson of Las Vegas. Construction was supervised by Harry L. Wyatt of the Las Vegas firm Burke and Wyatt. Massie L. Kennard, a Las Vegas civil rights leader, was the real estate agent.

Berkley Square was one of the first subdivisions to be built in the post-war era for the African American

⁵ *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 16, 1954.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 21 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

residents of West Las Vegas. It contributed to the improving living conditions for the city's African American community, and represented the advances that were being made as a result of local activism in the community in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The subdivision, which was first envisioned in 1947 and finally constructed in 1954-55, went through several major changes in ownership and financing before its realization.

African Americans in Las Vegas

There was not a large number of African Americans in Las Vegas until the war years. Early in Las Vegas history a few blacks moved to the city to work for the railroad and as laborers. African Americans were restricted to Block 17, next to the notorious Block 16 in downtown Las Vegas, by the Las Vegas Land and Water Company (the development arm of the railroad) in the first part of the century. They later lived in the larger downtown area, described as an eight block area that extended from First Street to Fifth Street and from Stewart to Ogden, however, until they were more or less forcibly removed to the Westside by the 1940s.⁶

Prior to the 1930s racism wasn't a significant problem in Las Vegas, in part because blacks did not represent a large percentage of the population.⁷ In 1930 there were 150 African-Americans in Las Vegas, representing 2.7% of the population. During the Depression workers and their families flooded Las Vegas, hoping to find work on Hoover Dam. African Americans were among those who sought employment there, but they were at first excluded from working on the dam.⁸ Nor were there many opportunities in the growing service and casino sectors. Having no prospects but also no resources, they stayed.

In the Depression years there was increasing pressure toward segregation. Several reasons have been put forward for this. Many of the white workers who came to work on Hoover Dam were from the south, and brought their attitudes toward race with them.⁹ The legalization of gambling in 1931 and increasing focus on tourism is another reason given for the increasing racism.¹⁰ A concrete action that increased tensions was the forced relocation of the established black community north of Fremont Street in conjunction with the construction of the Federal Post Office on Stewart Avenue in 1932. At this point there were already restrictions on many of the housing developments in Las Vegas, creating limitations as to where African-Americans could relocate.¹¹ Las Vegas was on its way to becoming a segregated city.

Relocation to the Westside

⁶ Kaufman, 2.

⁷ Overstreet, 21.

⁸ Moehring, 174. The NAACP field secretary William Pickens forced W.A. Bechtel, the head of one of the lead companies constructing the Dam, to hire the token number of 44 Blacks (Overstreet, 19).

⁹ Overstreet, 19.

¹⁰ Goodrich, 49.

¹¹ 20th Century Preservation, *West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory*, 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 22 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

By the 1940s, Las Vegas' black population was essentially relocated to the Westside. Two reasons are given for this. One was that blacks wanted to capitalize on rising land values, and sold their land in the downtown for a profit and relocated. Another reason was that the city's mayor and police chief refused to renew their business licenses if they did not relocate to the Westside.¹² In general, conditions were poor for African Americans in Las Vegas:

*Las Vegas had begun to unofficially institute Jim Crow laws, confining the black population to live in one area. Unfortunately the segregation was not limited to housing, as most of the casinos and other business establishments did not allow black patrons, or charged them higher prices for the same product or service. Black club owners were often not able to attain liquor and gambling licenses or were restricted to certain areas of town, and the black-owned business establishments were constantly raided during this time.*¹³

Even in earlier years the Westside developed slowly. Although it was within the Las Vegas city limits, there were no urban services, including water and sewer lines, and no fire protection. An editorial in 1916 reported on illness due to a contaminated water supply from surface wells.¹⁴ The fledgling community continued to petition the city's Public Service Commission for water lines with little result. "When McWilliams was appointed State Water Rights Surveyor for the region in 1906, the residents of Clark's Las Vegas Townsite were already referring to it as 'Ragtown.'"¹⁵

The townsite (the original townsite south of Berkley Square) consisted mainly of tents and shacks until the 1930s. A four room elementary school opened in 1922. Despite the development of two new tracts in 1924, Valley View and H.F.M.&M. Tracts, it was still without water. It was anticipated however that the area would be attractive to workers moving to the area to work on Hoover Dam, which was approved in 1928.¹⁶ In anticipation, a meeting was held on the Westside to discuss a possible bond issue in 1928. At this time 1,200 people lived on the Westside.¹⁷ Although the bond was approved for a municipally-owned water system in 1930 and funds authorized, the Westside did not receive water until the early 1940s.¹⁸

The population, including the black population, increased on the Westside with construction of the dam, but conditions remained the same. Finally monies for infrastructure improvements were received in 1934 through the New Deal programs, including funding for a sewer system for the entire city and graveled roads for the Westside. In 1938 a Westside Improvement Association was formed to demand police

¹² Overstreet, 22.

¹³ 20th Century Preservation, "West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory," 12.

¹⁴ 20th Century Preservation, "West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory," 9.

¹⁵ 20th Century Preservation, "West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory," 8.

¹⁶ 20th Century Preservation, "West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory," 9.

¹⁷ 20th Century Preservation, "West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory," 9.

¹⁸ 20th Century Preservation, "West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory," 10.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 23 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

protection, better water facilities, paved streets and streetlights and street signs. A common argument by the city for the lack of action was that land values were too low on the Westside to justify investing in these public services.¹⁹

Housing Shortages and Rising Tensions

The shortage of housing that had begun in the 1930s in Las Vegas became even more of a problem in the 1940s due to the influx of soldiers attending the Las Vegas Army Air Corps Gunnery School and workers for the defense plant Basic Magnesium, Inc. in Henderson. At the peak of the war years, 11,000 soldiers were stationed at what became Nellis Air Force Base in North Las Vegas and in 1944 13,000 employees worked at Basic Magnesium, Inc.²⁰ The problem was particularly pronounced for the African American community however. Exacerbating the housing shortage was the fact that blacks and whites had to be – or were – housed separately at these facilities. To alleviate some of the housing shortages in Las Vegas, the Federal Housing Administration approved the construction of 800 new homes in the fall of 1941. However, the new projects, the Mayfair, Biltmore, and Huntridge Additions, were to house white workers and their families.

In the 1940s Nevada's African American population rose from 664 to 4,302.²¹ As in other areas of the country, many ethnic and other dissimilar groups were suddenly forced to live and work in proximity to one another.²² This was exacerbated by the housing shortages. It has been noted that many of the defense workers also came from the rural south, and it was expected that housing would be segregated. Public housing for the Basic Magnesium, Inc. plant was not provided for blacks until Carver Park was opened in 1943.²³

This influx of people with no where to go had some positive effects on the Westside. A small business community that served the black residents thrived, and grew to include small jazz and social clubs, as blacks were not welcome in white-owned businesses in Las Vegas proper. But the housing conditions were very bad. A newspaper article published in July 1942 called them 'deplorable,' and stated that people were living in tents and shacks, and families of five and six people living in one-room shacks, sometimes without running water and sewer.²⁴

Once World War II came to an end, the city decided to handle the problem by clearing the sites. With no provisions made for re-housing the residents, the city razed 375 shacks between September 1944 and April 1945. Some of this land is still vacant today.

¹⁹ 20th Century Preservation, "West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory," 14.

²⁰ Las Vegas as a whole had only a population of 8,420 in 1940.

²¹ Overstreet, 22.

²² Crawford.

²³ Moehring, 37. It was designed by Paul Williams.

²⁴ Las Vegas Review-Journal, July 7, 1942, as quoted in *West Las Vegas historic Resource Survey and Inventory*, 16.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 24 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

National Press

In the 1950s both the racial tensions and the living conditions of Las Vegas' black community reached the national press. In March of 1954 an article was published in the national African-American magazine *Ebony* entitled "Negroes Can't Win in Las Vegas." It opened with a remark by "a Negro celebrity" who had recently visited Las Vegas and said, "It's like some place in Mississippi – downright prejudiced and really rough on colored people. It's worse than any place in Mississippi!" The phrase stuck, and it became known as "The Mississippi of the West." The article continued, stating that "No other town outside of Dixie has more racial barriers . . . For the Negro, 'Vegas' is as bad as towns come."²⁵

The article noted that African Americans were not welcome in downtown Las Vegas, or on the Strip, and that they could be served in only two downtown restaurants, and that other public venues were segregated. At that point in time, black entertainers could stay in hotels on the strip if they were there for a show, but they were discouraged from socializing in the hotel's club or casino.

The article did however report on progress being made in Nevada and Las Vegas. Anti-Jim Crow legislation was being introduced at the state level by Governor Charles H. Russell, and a NAACP-sponsored civil rights bill was also introduced. A Progressive Civic Service League was founded by Reverend Massie L. Kennard (who was also the real estate agent for Berkley Square), but that effort faltered for lack of interest.

The article notes that decent housing was the main issue facing Las Vegas' African Americans:

Negroes of Las Vegas have more to worry about than the gamblers. Housing is their most immediate problem. They presently live 'across the tracks' in a segregated unkempt area covering about 10-square blocks on the city's west flank. Called Westside, the area is separated from white communities by a yard of railroad tracks and a pedestrian-auto underpass which Negroes jokingly refer to as the 'Iron Curtain.' It has few lights, is poorly paved.

Most of the houses on the Westside – at least 70 percent – are sub-standard, one-and-two room shacks without toilets or running water or both. Often as many as five persons, adults and children, dwell in one of the rooms. Rent ranges from \$10 to \$17.50 a week.²⁶

The article called for public housing to be built in the city, and noted that architect Paul Williams was involved in designing a casino, hotel and 100-unit housing tract in town.²⁷ This article was published four days after a newspaper report on the hearing before the Indian Affairs Committee of the Assembly for a

²⁵ Goodrich, 45.

²⁶ Goodrich, 52.

²⁷ Goodrich, 50.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 25 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

proposed act to prohibit discrimination on account of “race, color, or creed in the admission of any person to, or the accommodation, resort, entertainment, or amusement.” [sic]²⁸ A spokesperson for the Progressive Party reported that, “Police departments in both Las Vegas and Reno have told Negroes they do not need to look to them for protection; that the Negroes have no rights, so why should we look out for them.”²⁹

Progress on the Westside

Progress was reported on Westside issues in a newspaper article dated March 22, 1949.³⁰ It was noted that milk was being provided for needy children, that plans were developing for a nursery school for working mothers, a public pay phone was to be installed on F Street, and sewer connections were being made. Further, training was to be provided in the “manual and home arts” for young people, and it was planned to add a library to the community center.

In 1951 zoning was changed so that a FHA-sponsored public housing project of 50 duplexes could be built in at the southwest corner of the intersection of Washington and H Street. The project was intended to house veterans, without discrimination as to race. A recommendation was also made that a 100-foot-wide highway be constructed through the 20-acre Zaugg tract (directly west of the H.F.M.&M. tract), on which a “shack town” was located; this became Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The housing project was expected to “greatly relieve the overcrowded living condition and so-called ‘shacks’ of the Westside and in particular the Zaugg tract.” This project, Marble Manor, opened in 1952. It was the first public housing project for African Americans after the war, and was lauded as “the first and will be the only project of its kind in the state of Nevada.”³¹

The project was protested by the white residents of Bonanza Village, Bonanza Road and surrounding area, who believed that it would cause their property values to drop. Residents stated that zoning that allowed low-cost housing and housing on small lots was the issue, while there was some indication that it was a racial issue. However, the petitioners were unsuccessful. A second public housing project was built in 1952. The private Berkley Square finally began construction in 1954, and the development team’s second project, Highland Square, began construction in 1956.

While housing conditions improved on the Westside, racial tensions continued. In 1955 there were about 16,000 blacks in Las Vegas, most living on the Westside. The casino resorts and hotels were still segregated, as were the schools. Although there was national press on the issues, segregation in Nevada’s hotels, casinos and housing did not end by statute until 1971. Segregation ended in the schools in 1972.³²

²⁸ *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 18, 1949, 7.

²⁹ *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 18, 1949, 7.

³⁰ *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 22, 1949, 4.

³¹ *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, December 22, 1950, 1.

³² 20th Century Preservation, *West Las Vegas Historic Resource Survey and Inventory*, 19.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 26 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

The Development of Berkley Square

Although the historic Westside has been an African American neighborhood since the 1940s, it developed around early settler John T. McWilliams' 1904 "Original Las Vegas Townsite." McWilliams' townsite lost in popularity to Montana senator William Clark's Las Vegas Townsite further east once the San Pedro, Los Angeles, & Salt Lake Railroad developed its line adjacent to it in 1905. Nonetheless McWilliams' townsite prospered until 1905, when it suffered from a series of fires. It continued to suffer from lack of urban services until it was redeveloped concurrent with Berkley Square and related projects.

Land Ownership

The 1929 and 1940 Map(s) of the City of Las Vegas shows the land on which Berkley Square was later eventually located to be owned by F.A. Stevens. In 1946 this area was still outside the city limits, the northern boundary of which was just north of Harrison. By 1953 the area north of the H.F.M.&M. Addition and Valley View Addition had been annexed, to eventually become Berkley Square, Cadillac Arms, and a property noted as owned by Crane, et. al. Clem Malone, a local businessman, owned the property when it was first considered for development as Westside Park.

Platting and Development

Planning for the Berkley Square subdivision, first known as Westside Park, began in 1947 with correspondence between the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), who was sponsoring the subdivision, and the City of Las Vegas. At that time the FHA suggested that the 40-acre parcel be platted for 158 lots. Covenants were suggested to govern land use, building height and site areas, setbacks, fences and landscaping, architectural design, minimum floor area, and utilities. Sidewalks were to be a minimum of 4 feet, and streets were to be 36 feet paved curb to curb. The covenants were to be in effect for a minimum of 25 years.

At that point in time, the development team consisted of Clem and Francis Malone, owners; C. D. Baker, surveyor; and Pioneer Realty, subdivider.³³ A tentative map was approved in September 1947 for a first phase, 20-acre development. It was described as follows: "A new 2-bedroom project for colored people; project sponsored by Pioneer Realty & Development Company, with Federal Housing insured loans."³⁴

The final map was approved by Planning Commission at their October 25, 1949 meeting. When the project was advertised in 1949, it was announced that noted African American architect Paul R. Williams would be designing the homes; Phil Shipley & Associates was the developer; Cutlett Construction Co. would construct the homes; and Stanley Nelson of Allied Building Credits was financing it.³⁵

³³ C.D. Baker was a future mayor of Las Vegas.

³⁴ Keller, E. E., "To C. G. Petrie." Inter-Office Communication, January 8, 1948. On file, Planning and Development, City of Las Vegas.

³⁵ Las Vegas Journal-Review, December 1949.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 27 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

From this point forward the project went through two additional changes in ownership. In 1951 it was owned by Chris A. Cosgrane and Houside Developer of San Diego. Finally in 1954 the owners and developers were listed as Edward A. and Ann Freeman, who were among the team that finally developed the property. Throughout these transitions there were virtually no design changes. The number of lots remained relatively consistent and the design covenants first proposed when the project was a FHA development remained the same.³⁶

Berkley Square was finally recorded May 27, 1954. The recorded owners were Edward A. Freeman and J. J. Byrnes. Covenants for the 148-lot subdivision were recorded May 28, 1954 and amended December 29, 1954. At that time it was called Berkley Square, and the project was sponsored by the Veterans Administration. Architectural controls were in place, including controls on the placement of fences. Freeman, Byrnes and Wyatt were named as the architectural control committee, and established a process for their review of proposals.

The final development team was: Paul R. Williams, architect; Thomas L. Berkley, financier; Edward A. Freeman and J. J. Byrnes, financiers; Leonard A. Wilson, developer; Harry L. Wyatt (Burke and Wyatt), construction contractor; and Massie L. Kennard, real estate agent.³⁷

Role of Thomas L. Berkley

Berkley Square is significant for its association with Thomas L. Berkley. Berkley (1915-2001) was one of the financiers for Berkley Square. He was a prominent attorney, media-owner (*The Oakland Post*, *El Mundo*), developer and civil rights activist in Oakland. His obituary recognizes the contribution he made in Las Vegas: "In 1955, as a strong supporter of civil rights and housing opportunities, he developed Berkley Square, a 250-house racially integrated housing tract in Las Vegas."³⁸

Thomas Berkley was the son of a coal miner and teacher from Illinois, but he grew up in California's Imperial Valley. He graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles and attended University of California at Berkeley and Boalt Hall. He graduated with a doctorate in law from Hastings University in 1942.

Berkley started his law firm after he served in World War II. It was the first African-American-owned law practice in Oakland.³⁹ It was one of the largest African-American businesses in the state of California, and is considered the largest ethnically integrated, bilingual law firm in the nation today.⁴⁰ He also owned

³⁶ Records on file at City of Las Vegas Development Services Center.

³⁷ While there is not concrete evidence that Paul R. Williams was the designer of Berkley Square as it transitioned through the various owners, it had already been designed and 70 homes sold when the project itself was sold. As noted, no substantial design changes were made beyond the 1949 proposal. There is no reason to believe that the project as constructed in 1954 was not the project designed by Paul R. Williams in 1949.

³⁸ *The Oakland Tribune*, December 28, 2001. The 250-units refer to both Berkley Square and Highland Square.

³⁹ *The Oakland Tribune*, November 1, 2002.

⁴⁰ *The Oakland Tribune*, May 9, 2002.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 28 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

and published the *Oakland Post*, which he founded in 1963. It is still operating as an African American newspaper. His daughter Gail Berkley is executive editor and Paul Cobb, who previously worked for Berkley, is the current owner. Berkley founded *El Mundo*, the largest Spanish-language newspaper in the state of California. He was co-founder of the West Coast Black Publishers Association.

He founded the Intercity Democratic Club of Northern California. He also was a director with the Golden State Mutual Insurance Co. and a consultant to the Office of Economic Opportunity in California under Ronald Reagan. He also co-founded and was first president of the Beneficial Savings and Loan Association, which provided services for the poor.⁴¹

Public service included eleven-year tenure as Port of Oakland Commissioner. He was the first African American to serve as a commissioner for a major port. Other commissions and boards on which he sat were the California World Trade Commission and the Oakland School Board.

He was a frequent guest at the White House during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.⁴² Former San Francisco mayor Willie Brown spoke at his funeral, as did U.S. Representative Barbara Lee and then Oakland mayor Jerry Brown.

Berkley was also a developer, undertaking housing projects, shopping centers and apartment complexes in California and Nevada.

Today the site on which his Oakland Post building once stood is being redeveloped as a mixed use project that includes housing and Alameda County social service offices. A portion of San Pablo Avenue at 20th Street in Oakland has been renamed Thomas Berkley Way in his honor. The project will be called Thomas L. Berkley Square.

While it is not known how Thomas Berkley became involved in the Las Vegas project, his advocacy on the part of African Americans and his experience as a developer would have infused new energy into the project. It is evident from the newspaper photograph that showcases his involvement, as well as the groundbreaking photograph in which he figures prominently, that he was a leader of the development team, in addition to providing financing.

Planning Context

The significance of the architecture of Berkley Square is primarily due to the fact that it was designed by Paul R. Williams and explored some of the concepts that he documented in his books *The Small Home of Tomorrow* and *New Homes for Today*. It is also a good example of a subdivision designed in concurrence

⁴¹ *The Oakland Tribune*, December 28, 2001.

⁴² *The Oakland Tribune*, December 28, 2001.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 29 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

with FHA standards of the 1940s and for the design of the homes, which are designed in the Contemporary Ranch House style.

Although Berkley Square was eventually sponsored by the Veteran's Administration, it was conceived as a Federal Housing Administration (FHA) project and displays the design characteristics of an FHA subdivision. The FHA was established by the National Housing Act of 1934 to stimulate building without government spending. Its stated purpose was "to encourage improvement in housing standards and conditions, to facilitate sound home financing on reasonable terms, and to exert a stabilizing influence on the mortgage market." It was also to help alleviate unemployment, which was at 25% at that time, and particularly high in the construction industry.⁴³

The FHA insured long term mortgage loans made by private lenders for home construction and sale. They induced lenders to invest in residential mortgages by insuring them against loss, which revolutionized the home finance industry.⁴⁴ Previously, larger down payments were required by mortgage lenders, and the loans had a shorter repayment period. FHA mortgages were guaranteed for 25-to-30 years, allowing for a lower average monthly payment.

The FHA also influenced the design of subdivisions and homes across the country, as it was required that a bank, before lending money to a real-estate developer, obtain FHA approval. This gave the FHA an opportunity to advise developers and oversee development standards and processes.⁴⁵ The Land Planning Division of the FHA was also established in 1934. They provided oversight, as well as design services, to prospective development projects. They also established standards.

Among the concepts promoted by the FHA were curved streets, looping streets, and short cul-de-sacs intended to slow traffic and protect children. Differentiated circulation – that is, the superblock concept with only a few external access points – was intended to reduce the volume of traffic in the subdivision. This is reflected in the design of Berkley Square, which accesses external streets at only three points. The subdivisions were to include parks, schools and commercial development. Pedestrian safety was a primary concern and there was a perceived need to separate automobile and pedestrian traffic. This is reflected in Berkley Square with the system of separated sidewalks.

Architectural Context

The houses of Berkley Square are Contemporary Style Ranch Houses. Alan Hess defines the character-defining features of the Ranch House as follows. It is a one-story house with a low-pitched, gabled, or hipped roof, with wide eaves; of general asymmetry with a horizontal emphasis; an open-interior plan

⁴³ Jackson, 203.

⁴⁴ Jackson, 204.

⁴⁵ Newton, 643.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 30 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

blending functional spaces; strong connections to the outside; with informal or rustic materials or details; and a plan that is rambling and suggestive of wings or additions.⁴⁶

Ranch houses are regarded as emerging from a design aesthetic pioneered in California and the west, inspired by traditional vernacular structures and the design influences of the Bay Area Regional Style architects. Ranch houses became the house style of choice in the post-World War II building boom, and proliferated throughout the United States. Their ubiquity was in part due to the standardized and streamlined building methods that were developed at the same time that the house style was popularized. These methods were developed in the course of providing defense housing and mobilizing for the war, and refined after the war as merchant builders built entire neighborhoods and communities to meet the pent-up housing demand.

The time frame in which Berkley Square was designed was a time of transition between the Minimal Traditional style and the later Ranch Style, considering that they were designed in the late 1940s.⁴⁷ The Minimal Traditional style is an early modern style often exemplified by the small homes designed under the auspices of FHA guidelines. The houses typically have a nearly square footprint, a nearly cubic form, a fairly shallow roof pitch, and little or no eaves. They are one story and often have a hip roof. Visual interest is provided by a change in materials, offering contrasting textures and colors. Shutters and multi-light windows are common. Rooms were typically accessed via a central small open space. However, there was a great deal of interest at this time in 'modernizing' this more traditional home.

The later Ranch Style typically features a rectangular footprint and elongated form, the long 'face' located parallel to the street frontage. Roof slopes are shallow and feature deep eaves. They are one story and typically have hip roofs or gable roofs. Building features are horizontally oriented and asymmetrically arranged. Rustic features, such as board-and-batten siding, are common. The main living areas are typically open, and the private areas are accessed via a hall that is parallel to the long face of the rectangle.

The homes of Berkley Square borrow features from both of these modern styles, plus displaying some features unique to the subdivision. They display the building form and internal organization of the Ranch House, but offer the clear composition and clean lines of early modern architectural influences. The most unique character-defining features of the homes are the windows. They have multiple lights, steel frames, and a combination of casement and fixed sashes. The characteristic (large) windows are nearly square with a slight vertical or slight horizontal emphasis, with six lights.

The prevailing attitude toward the design of the single family home at this time can best be described by

⁴⁶ Hess, *Ranch House*, 17.

⁴⁷ It was announced in 1947 that Paul R. Williams would be the architect for Berkley Square, but the project was not constructed until 1954-55.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 31 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

the following excerpts from *The Book of Houses*, published in 1946. This is a collection of home designs by some of the country's most highly regarded architects of the time, designed to FHA standards:

*Trends in architectural design are clearly in flux at present. In part this is due to new materials and new structural techniques offering previously unforeseen possibilities. Part of it is a revolt against the somewhat cramping styles we have brought down with the traditions of the past. Amid all the changing styles, however, the trend toward a simple, honest, "modern" home is emerging as the best way to get the most housing for the least money.*⁴⁸

The writers of the book offered the following suggestions to prospective home buyers:

Choose a house which does not strive for "cute" or "picturesque" effects. Designs free from unnecessary ornamentation or unusual and bizarre effects will retain popularity much longer, while the extra costs of special styling will be saved.

*Pick a house which does not sacrifice convenient, functional living arrangements in order to copy the past.*⁴⁹

The Architect – Paul R. Williams

Paul R. Williams was hired to design the first Westside Park project in 1949.⁵⁰ Williams (1894-1980) was an African American architect from Los Angeles. He was internationally recognized, and acquired many 'firsts' in his career, including the first African American to become a member of the American Institute of Architects and the first to be elected a Fellow of the organization.⁵¹ He was active in public service, and served on the California Housing Commission, the California Redevelopment Commission, and the California Beautiful Commission.

He studied at the Los Angeles School of Art and the Los Angeles Beaux-Arts Institute of Design and the engineering school at the University of Southern California. He worked for planner and landscape architect Wilbur D. Cook, Jr., residential architect Reginald D. Johnson, and commercial architect John C. Austin, before opening his own firm in 1922.⁵²

Williams did a significant amount of work in Las Vegas. He designed the O. H. Nelson residence in 1951; the Royal Nevada in 1955; the Stalcup Shopping Center and Las Vegas Hotel Casino & Shopping Center in 1957; alterations to the Flamingo Hotel in 1959; and the La Concha Motel in 1962. He also

⁴⁸ Dean, 138.

⁴⁹ Dean, 138.

⁵⁰ *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, December 14, 1949, 4.

⁵¹ Gebhard, 19.

⁵² Gebhard, 21.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 32 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

designed the Frederick Leistikow Residence. The design of 498 units of housing for Basic Magnesium Inc. is attributed to Williams. He was also known for designing buildings for African American businesses, including Golden State Mutual Life Insurance.

Early in his career he was best known as a residential architect, and designed both high-style single family homes and housing. A *New York Times* article referred to him as “architect to the stars.”⁵³ He designed over 2,000 homes in such prestigious communities as Hollywood, Pacific Palisades, Brentwood and Palm Springs over the course of his career.⁵⁴ Some of the well-known individuals for whom he designed homes are Lon Chaney, Jay Paley, Morris Landau, Frank Sinatra, and Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball.

He was an extremely versatile designer, however, in terms of style and building type.⁵⁵ He would eventually undertake a broad array of project types including hotels (Beverly Hills Hotel); commercial buildings (Saks Fifth Avenue, Los Angeles); whole communities (Pueblo del Rio, a integrated 400-unit defense housing project); and country club/resorts (Palm Springs Tennis Club). He became adept in designing in historic styles including Spanish Colonial Revival, Classical Revival and Tudor Revival, and later styles including Streamline Moderne and Contemporary Style Ranch houses.

Williams published two pattern books on small houses, *The Small Home of Tomorrow* in 1945, and *New Homes for Today* in 1946. The homes in the books are described as follows: “The books advocated open plans, flatter roofs, and a minimum of ornament, and demonstrated a number of low-budget contemporary designs, including the Neutra Home.”⁵⁶ This was a time when many architects were tackling the concept of the small house, in part because of the opportunities presented by the FHA. Williams had had ample opportunity to acquaint himself with housing issues of the time. He was appointed a commissioner on the National Board of Municipal Housing in 1933, and in Los Angeles was a member of the Housing Commission from 1933 through 1941.⁵⁷

According to his biographer, granddaughter Karen E. Hudson, the modernized Ranch house became his specialty, as exemplified in the 1946 Carver Manor Homes in Los Angeles and Del Rio Development in Tuscan, Arizona: “The Carver Manor houses are more traditional versions of the popular single-story ranch house, while the small, single-family Del Rio houses are of the modernist wood-post-and-beam designs that were so popular in California in the late forties and the fifties.”⁵⁸

Summary

Berkley Square has been recognized as the first minority-built subdivision in Nevada. It is associated

⁵³ Hudson, 7.

⁵⁴ Goodyear, 70.

⁵⁵ One writer described his work as “graceful, conservative, and lastingly attractive.” (Goodyear, 70).

⁵⁶ Goodyear, 72.

⁵⁷ Gebhard, 25.

⁵⁸ Gebhard, 26.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 33 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

with the prominent African-Americans Thomas L. Berkley and Paul R. Williams. It represents the strides made by the African-American community in the period of activism leading up to the Civil Rights era, by providing quality housing and services to Las Vegas' historically neglected Westside. It is still a predominantly African American community, and many homes have been kept within the family that originally purchased them when constructed in the 1950s. The integrity of the community is a testament to the care taken in its planning, design and development.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 34 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 35 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 36 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 37 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 38 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

Boundary Description

The boundary of the Berkley Square Historic District is coterminous with the boundary of the subdivision itself. Berkley Square is located within Las Vegas' Westside, northwest of downtown Las Vegas. It is a subdivision designed in the late 1940s and recorded in 1954, with the houses constructed in two phases, in 1954 and 1955. It comprises 148 lots in a roughly square, 30-acre parcel, arranged in a predominately rectilinear block pattern, with one curving street. There are only three direct access points to the surrounding neighborhood, which is made up of similarly-designed subdivisions and developments within large superblocks, with controlled access points, linked by broad arterial streets. The streets describing the perimeter of the development, which typically have lots on both sides, are Byrnes Avenue, D Street, Leonard Avenue, and G Street. Additionally there is one interior north-south street, F Street, and two interior east-west streets, Wyatt Avenue and Freeman Avenue. The streets are named after the developers, Leonard and Freeman, and the builders, Wyatt and Byrnes. The letter names respond to Las Vegas' larger street naming conventions in this area.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Berkley Square Historic District are coterminous with the boundaries of the original plat, as recorded in 1954. Berkley Square is surrounded by similarly designed subdivisions and developments (with the exception of the original town plat on the southern border), with limited access points, where the internally-oriented developments feed into larger arterials that carry traffic throughout the Westside. This is a suburban-style development pattern that leads each development to be somewhat self-contained and inward-looking, a pattern that was fostered by the Federal Housing Administration standards that governed this and similar developments at the time. This pattern characterizes much of Las Vegas' suburban, primarily post-war, development.

The street cross section and design and lot size and pattern are similar throughout this development. The setbacks are uniform and orientation consistent throughout. In the first 25 years, covenants governing fences and building in setbacks led to even greater consistency among the individual parcels and thus the streetscape. While there is greater variation today in fences, landscaping, and other exterior features, the pattern established by early platting, siting and design, leads to the regularity in the subdivision today, reinforcing the rationale as the subdivision itself for the boundary for the historic district.

Berkley Square is additionally somewhat isolated by the fact that a large vacant right-of-way (H Street and the right-of-way adjacent to it) exists to the west. This was part of the original engineering, intended to separate this African-American subdivision from Bonanza Village to the west. To the south, at the entrance of the subdivision, are two developments oriented south toward Owens Street. The land bordering the actual entrance on F Street, however, is vacant, also lending to the self-contained air of the neighborhood. On the east, D Street, a large north-south arterial, separates the development from a neighboring subdivision and a vacant parcel. Berkeley Square is not linked to the subdivision to the

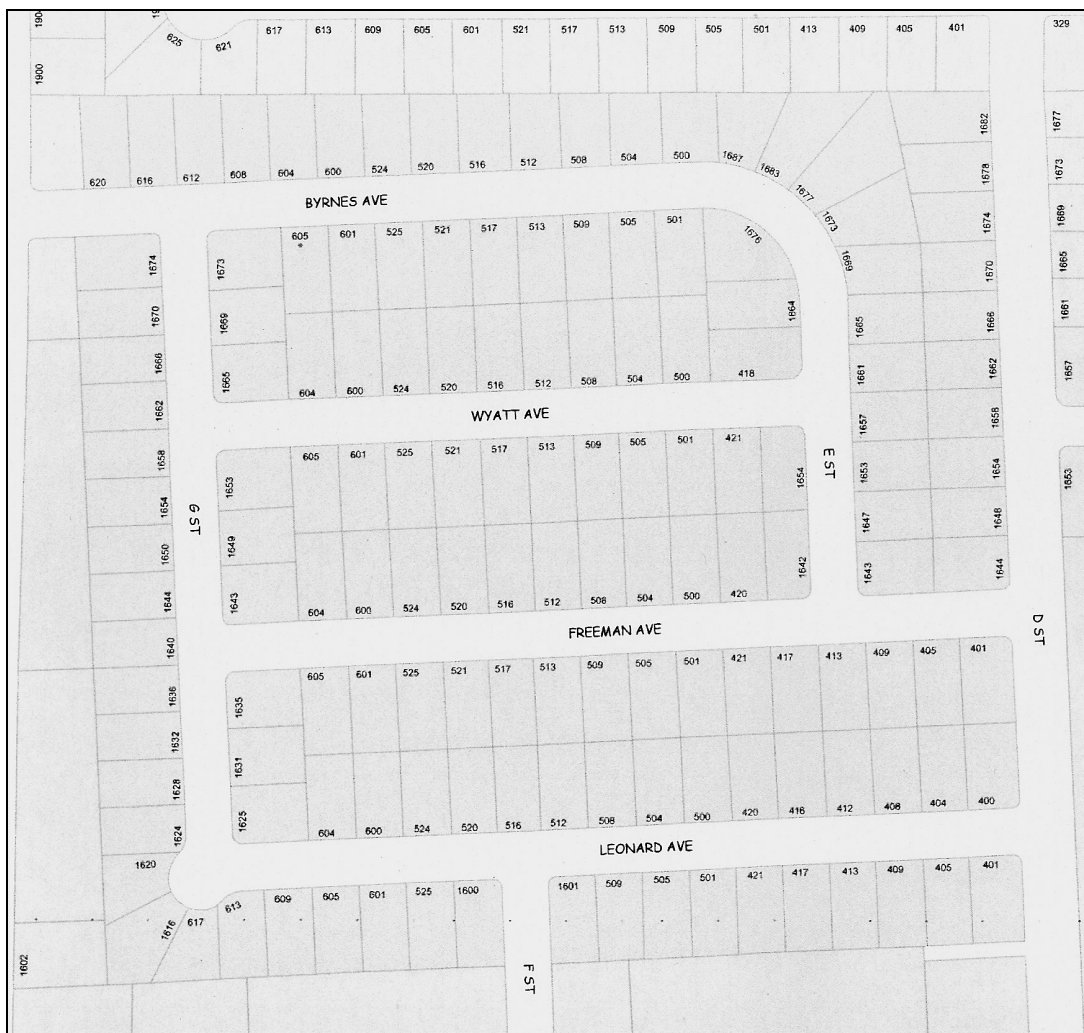
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 39 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

north, although this subdivision displays a similar street layout and subdivision design. In summary, the subdivision is not integrated with any surrounding parcels or developments. It is further distinguished by the fact that this development displays a more refined architectural expression than surrounding developments.



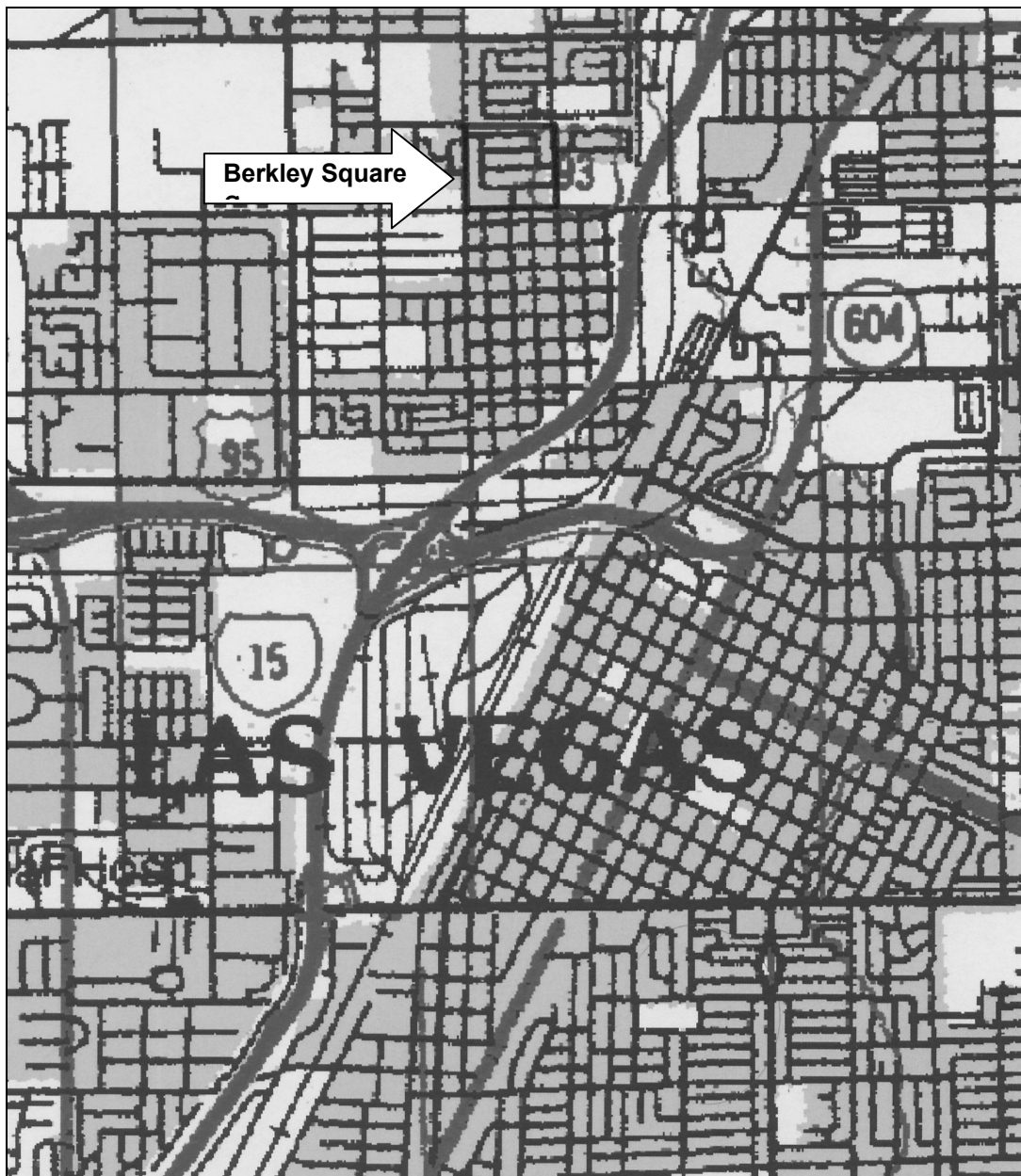
Subdivision layout

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 40 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada



Neighborhood Context

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 41 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Center for Cultural Resources



Volume 3 Number 1 Winter 2006

Rediscovering a Las Vegas Neighborhood's African American Roots

By Courtney Mooney

Survey and inventory of historic resources should be an integral part of every city's redevelopment process. This type of research is not only a valuable economic planning tool but also an exciting opportunity to unearth valuable gems, as was the case with a study of West Las Vegas, a historic, predominantly African American, area of Las Vegas, Nevada. The City of Las Vegas's Historic Preservation Plan calls for the ongoing documentation of historic neighborhoods and properties. Each year, the City of Las Vegas Planning and Development Department applies for grant money from the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Fund for survey and inventory through the State Historic Preservation Office. In 2002, the award funded the research of the "Historic Westside" area.

The rediscovery of the origins of the Berkley Square neighborhood in West Las Vegas, a post-World War II subdivision marketed to African Americans, began with a chance newspaper research find during this 2002 survey. Two newspaper articles published in December 1949 announced the opening of a new subdivision named "Westside Park," with 155 tract houses designed by a "famed" African American architect, Paul Revere Williams.⁽¹⁾ Because the development site was outside the 2002 survey boundaries in an area now called Berkley Square, this information became a side note in the historic context statement.

In 2004, discussions about moving the La Concha Motel's mid-century, free-form concrete lobby again raised the name of architect Paul R. Williams. Williams was well known for his movie-star homes and public buildings in Los Angeles, such as Frank Sinatra's Trousdale estate and the Los Angeles County Courthouse. With the potential connection to the West Las Vegas subdivision in mind, the City of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission began discussing Berkley Square as a possible survey area for the 2004 National Park Service grant.

Several issues complicated the decision to survey this area. The 1949 articles referred to a development called Westside Park, but the subdivision was now called Berkley Square, with county assessor information showing construction dates of 1954-55. What happened between 1949 and 1954? Were the Berkley Square homes actually designed by Williams? All the Historic Preservation Commission had to go by were documents describing a land sale and a current photograph of a house that resembled the architect's sketch accompanying the 1949 articles. The Commission voted to include Berkley Square in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 42 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

the 2004 survey and hired a historic preservation consultant, Diana Painter of Painter Preservation and Planning, to document the neighborhood and solve the mystery.

Painter began by documenting and photographing all buildings within the neighborhood, providing a Nevada State Historic Resource Inventory Form for each. A historic context statement was prepared to help assess the importance of the properties within the contexts of Las Vegas history and mid-century residential design. In addition, research was conducted at the historical society, local libraries and museums, and the Environmental Design Library at the University of California at Berkeley. Painter also used information from a previous interview with Karen Hudson, Williams' granddaughter. From this research, she was able to stitch together compelling arguments for a probable link to the Los Angeles architect as well as for eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Besides attracting a famous clientele and important public commissions, Williams was the first black architect to become a member of the American Institute of Architects and served on the California Housing Commission and the California Redevelopment Commission. He published two pattern books on small houses, *Small Home of Tomorrow* (1945) and *New Homes for Today* (1946).⁽²⁾ By 1949, he had won three national competitions for small home design, and he would eventually design military housing and other housing stock for subdivisions. According to his granddaughter, the modernized ranch house became his specialty.

Williams' design for Berkley Square filled a desperate need for adequate housing in West Las Vegas. Platted by surveyor J.T. McWilliams in 1905, settlement began as a wayside for miners. It was hoped that the arrival of the railroad would bring prosperity, but these hopes were unrealized. The railroad company owned most of the land east of the completed tracks, as well as all of the water rights, effectively controlling development for decades.

During the 1930s, McWilliams's Townsite, now called "the Westside," had few permanent buildings, but blacks were free to own businesses and live on the east side of town. Subsequent segregation practices in Las Vegas forced most of the black families to relocate to the Westside. Well into the 1940s, the area lacked basic amenities such as sewer and paved streets, with sometimes two or more families living in small, one-room wood shacks. Low-income minorities and whites continued to find refuge here, with the black population having the strongest cultural presence. A community of churches, businesses, and nightclubs was formed using the residents' own resources and ingenuity. Adequate housing lagged far behind, however, especially during and after World War II, when many black soldiers returned home or residents lost their jobs at the local Air Force base or military industrial plants.

Westside Park/Berkley Square was the result of "four years of planning, designing and negotiating with government officials, by a group of local businessmen endeavoring to make the first real contribution to improvement of conditions on the city's Westside."⁽³⁾ It was sorely needed in 1947, when the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) began discussions with the City of Las Vegas to develop a "new 2-bedroom project for colored people...with Federal Housing insured loans."⁽⁴⁾ The property changed hands several times, but finally in 1954 with new owners, Edward A. Freeman and J.J. Byrnes, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 43 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

subdivision was recorded as Berkley Square with 148 lots on 22 acres.

The new “Berkley Square” name came from Thomas L. Berkley, of Oakland, California. Berkley was a distinguished African American attorney, media owner, developer, civil rights advocate, and a frequent guest at the White House during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. It was in his civil rights capacity that he became partial financier of Berkley Square. An article in the *Las Vegas Review Journal* from April 1954 stated that Berkley Square was “the first minority group subdivision to be approved for construction in the state of Nevada.”⁽⁵⁾

Painter’s report established Berkley Square’s eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as the first subdivision in Nevada built by and for African Americans. The subdivision contributed to improved living conditions for the community and represented the progress of local civil rights activism. In addition, Berkley Square is significant for its association with attorney Berkley and architect Williams. The neighborhood of suburban one-story ranch houses also retains much of its architectural integrity.

The City of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission will review the report and cooperate with the Neighborhood Services Department on an educational brochure for the residents of the area that describes the historic importance of Berkley Square and provides information on the local and National Registers. Should the Berkley Square neighborhood representatives be interested in pursuing designation, they can initiate the neighborhood plan process offered through the City’s Neighborhood Services Department, a component of which can be a request to complete the listing process. The community has expressed much interest in its past, and the Historic Preservation Commission is excited about the prospect of designating this historically rich African American neighborhood.

End Notes

1. “New Westside Homes Project Gets Under Way,” and “Famed Architect Designs Homes for Westside Park,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (December 14, 1949).
2. See Painter Preservation and Planning, “Berkley Square Historic Resource Survey and Inventory” (August 2005), on file at the City of Las Vegas Planning and Development Department and Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.
3. “New Subdivision Work Underway,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (April 26, 1954).
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*

About the Author

Courtney Mooney is the Historic Preservation Officer and Urban Design Coordinator for the City of Las Vegas

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 44 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

Las Vegas Review-Journal Wednesday, Dec. 14, 1949



PLANNED FOR WESTSIDE—Here is the architect's design for one of the homes to be built in Westside park, a new subdivision opened today at the terminus of F street.

New Westside Homes Project Gets Under Way

Four years of planning, designing and negotiating with government officials, by a group of local businessmen endeavoring to make the first real contribution to improvement of conditions on the city's westside, were completed today with the official opening of a new housing subdivision in Las Vegas.

To be known as Westside Park, the new subdivision will be built and developed by Phil Shipley and associates, Inc., incorporated, and the Curlett construction company, joint sponsors, in conjunction with Clem Malone, owner of the subdivision site.

Announcing the opening of the new westside tract today, the sponsors revealed plans for the construction of 36 homes, first of a 155 home unit, selling in the neighborhood of \$7,700.

Paul R. Williams, A.I.A., nationally-known Negro architect, has designed the plans for the new homes in the tract and is in charge of all plans for their construction, the subdividers said.

With the announcement of the tract opening, the sponsors, headed by Malone, revealed full details of plans and construction.

The plans, as drawn by Williams are the realization of many months of study, as well as years of experience in the field in which he excels so ably. Only his personal interest in this project, we feel sure, makes it the outstanding in the nation.

Plans provide for two bedrooms, living room, dining area, bath, kitchen, storage and service porch in every house.

The houses will be of concrete block or masonry construction with "Tropicool" roof, steel casement windows, steel kitchen cabinets, etc.

Famed Architect Designs Homes for Westside Park

When the future homes, to be built in the newly opened Westside Park development are completed they will have the advantage of modern design created by one of the best-known architects in the field of residential construction.

Paul R. Williams, A.I.A., whose personal interest in the problems of Las Vegas westside residents was a major contribution to the new development, began his architectural career as a residential specialist by winning of three national competitions. Although these designs were for small homes, opinion was that they were far ahead of their time, and were based on the principle that owners of small homes could enjoy the same formula for pleasant living as those able to afford more spacious homes.

In 25 years of practice Williams has designed more than 1500 private homes and 3000 small homes in developments throughout Arizona, California and Nevada.

Recognized internationally for his ability, Williams has received commissions from Bogota, Columbia, Bali, Ecuador, Honolulu, and Mexico. He has designed homes and commercial residents of Washington, New York, and Kansas.

He has designed homes for such famous people as E. L. Cord; William Paley, Tyrone Power, Betty Grable, Lucille Ball, John Charles Thomas and the late Bill Robinson.

His plans for a \$3,000,000 unit for the Los Angeles General hospital, the superior courts building, Los Angeles, three buildings in New York City and two country estates in Venezuela, South America are now being completed.

The tract construction, which will lend much to improvement of conditions on the Westside, is only the first step in plans for extensive development of the property, more familiarly known to local residents as the Malone ranch, its owner said.



Paul Williams

MONTE CA
The Home of M

Article Announcing that Williams will Design Westside Park

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

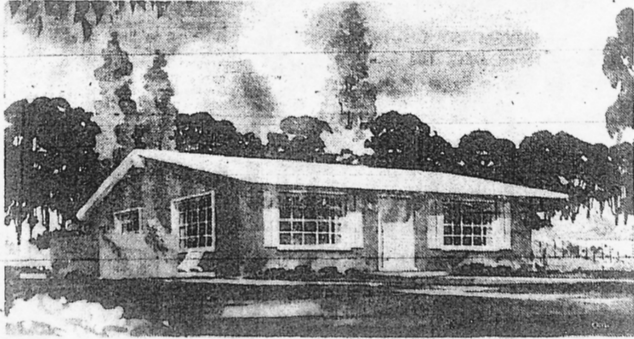
Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 45 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

Opening of Sales Offices

WESTSIDE PARK HOMES

North End of "F" Street in Westside Las Vegas



For Information Regarding Purchase of These Homes
Sales Office Open 12 Noon to 8 P. M. Daily--Phone 5411

Masonry Construction 2 - Bedroom Homes

LIVING ROOM	STEEL KITCHEN CABINETS
COMBINATION KITCHEN and DINING AREA	COMLETELY DECORATED
2 BEDROOMS	ALUMINUM WINDOWS
BATH	TROPICOL ROOF
STORAGE ROOM and SERVICE PORCH	AIR CONDITIONED
	ELECTRIC HEATERS

PAVED STREETS, SEWER, WATER, POWER, INCLOSED AND
PAVED TERRACE WITH EACH HOUSE, COMPLETELY LAND-
SCAPED, LAWNS, TREES, SHRUBS, REAR YARD FENCED,
CONCRETE CURBS AND GUTTERS.

F H A APPROVED

Phil Shipley and Associates, Inc., and Curlett Construction Co.
Joint Sponsors

1949 Advertisement for Westside Park

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 46 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada



Thomas Berkley and Development Team

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 47 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada




Portrait of Paul R. Williams

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 48 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada



THE AUTHOR

PAUL R. WILLIAMS is internationally known as a creator of livable homes, having designed over 2,000 homes in Southern California and in various sections of the United States, Mexico and South America. His parents migrated from the South in the early nineties and landed in California, where Mr. Williams was born.

He started his career as a designer of interesting homes by winning three national competitions, in one of which over three thousand designs were submitted. It was due to the tremendous popularity of this winning design that Mr. Williams started planning small homes with the living side of the home facing a private garden.

The principal formula which has made these homes so popular is that they are designed around the way an owner lives, which gives them personality. This accounts for the fact that so many motion picture stars and executives in Hollywood and Beverly Hills live in homes designed by Paul Williams.

Mr. Williams is a member of the National Technical Association and the American Institute of Architects.

THE SMALL HOME OF TOMORROW

It is a foregone conclusion that there will be thousands of modern small homes built in the post-war world. An eager generation of young people coming out of the war is filled with the desire to have homes of their own — and homes of their own planning and building. An equally eager but not quite so young generation is asking feverishly: "How soon can we build? What will the new homes be like? What are the labor-saving and beauty-enhancing innovations being prepared for us in the laboratories and factories of the country?"

These are the questions this important and timely book sets out to answer. Only the most practical and already well developed mechanical helps are mentioned but these developments are truly startling. They are explained in detail in *The Architect's Notebook of New Products* in the back of this volume and have been taken into full consideration in each of the forty delightful floor plans and elevations of Modern Homes from the pen of one of America's most brilliant and talented architects. These homes range from \$3,000 to \$10,000 in price. Outlined in detail are the Kitchen of Tomorrow and the Bathroom of Tomorrow. There is also a plan of the small Modern Garden and hints on decoration for many of the homes.

THINGS TO COME

As a foretaste of some of the things to come let us here mention just a few: An electric oven which will cook a roast in less than five minutes — a unit independent of the stove with a glass door and built into the wall; An air-conditioning lamp which kills all bacteria; Another lamp which collects all dust and pollen in the room; Still another lamp which prevents mold in the refrigerator; A completely automatic laundry which operates by simply pressing a button; Plastic vacuum cleaners with trays instead of dust-bags; Walk-in refrigerators with a deep-freeze unit or small deep-freeze units built into the conventional household refrigerator to keep vegetables, fruits and meat fresh for off-season consumption; Heaters no larger than a lunch-box — now used to heat large transport planes — will be used to heat large rooms; Plastic doorknobs, screens, panels and even walls; A kitchen sink operated entirely by foot pedals — even for garbage disposal; All-weather window glass; Heating and air-conditioning units sending forced air through the house — cool air in summer, warm air in winter; Fluorescent lighting for economy of current and elimination of heat; Polarized glass to permit clear vision but yet eliminate the direct entrance of the sun's rays; Screens built on the principle of miniature venetian blinds.

SHALL WE GO MODERN?

There is a question in the minds of many people as to what is meant by good modern architecture, and rightly so. They visualize the post-war house as a glittering machine, moored down to earth by wires and cement blocks, and they don't want it. Good modern design is sensible, not tricky or gadgety. Construction materials will include all of the old ones . . . wood, stone, glass, metal, brick and tile . . . assembled in new forms, together with a world of proven new materials such as plywood, plastics and fabrics.

Each section of the country should develop a type of house which would suit its particular climatic and economic needs. In Pennsylvania, for example, field stone might be used in building a modern home as well as for the farmhouse. In California, redwood will be used successfully.

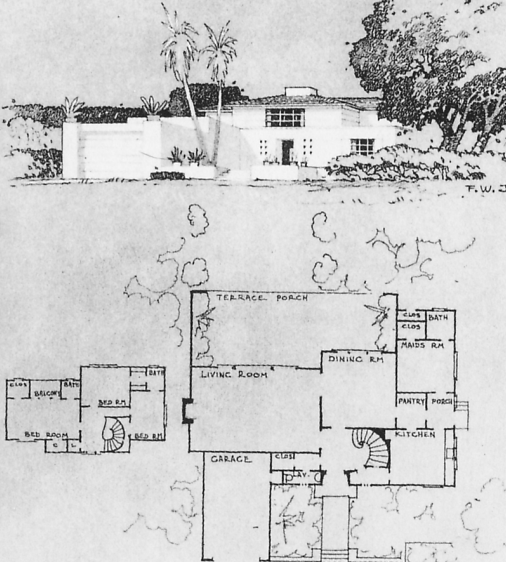
7

"THE EMBASSY"

This plan expresses dignity and formality yet is, relatively, a small house. The exterior is built of brick with some wood to relieve the severeness. If built in a tropical climate, a color scheme of brick painted a coral color and trimmed in white or grey would be interesting.

The plan is well arranged with the entrance hall and stairway accessible from the kitchen, and the living room and dining room planned to face the garden terrace, which can be turned into an outdoor living room by using a canvas awning and screening the garden side.

The garage can be easily expanded to house two automobiles, and an additional maid's room can be added to the service wing.



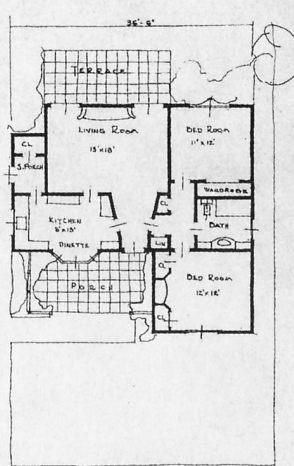
Excerpt from Williams' *The Small Home of Tomorrow*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

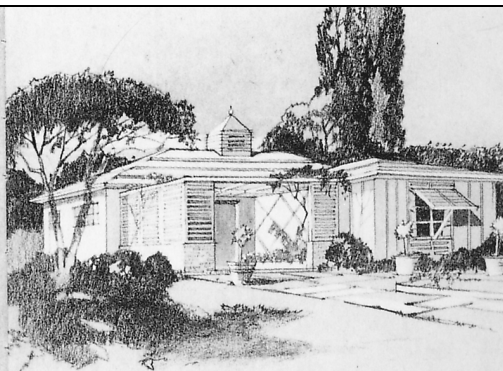
Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 49 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada



TOWN COTTAGE

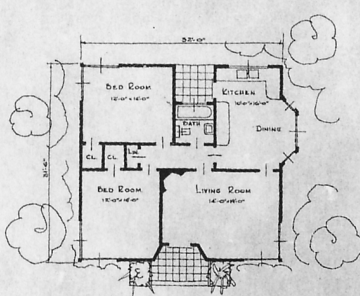
House	380	Sq. Ft.
1/2 Porches	110	
TOTAL	490	



"TOWN COTTAGE"

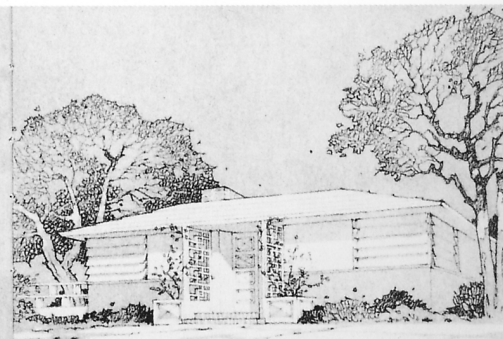
Here is a two bedroom cottage with less than 1000 square feet of floor space. The kitchen has been made very important by the addition of the bay window which commands a pleasant position under the rose trellis and can be used as a sewing alcove, dining nook or just a place to sit and watch the traffic go by. The arrangement not only simplifies house-keeping but reduces traffic through other rooms. The entrance hall is well located and is really part of the living room. With this compact arrangement, one space heater located in the hall should heat the entire house. The louvered panels which support the rose-trellis provide cross ventilation and protection against a strong breeze. Various prefabricated wall and roof materials may be used in this house.

59



THE VETERAN

House	950	Sq. Ft.
1/2 Porches	40	
TOTAL	990	



"THE VETERAN"

The average "Dream Home" is getting smaller each day principally because building costs are higher and the experts say you should not spend more than twice your yearly income for a new home. Fortunately, there is no rule that says good taste is governed by income. This home is influenced by cost and is reminiscent of what the war hero saw during his various stops around the world.

The plan is very compact with a large leisure room and breakfast bar. The walls in the living room are covered with grass cloth, the ceiling is wood, painted coffee color. The windows are covered on the outside with "jalousies", an adjustable shutter-awning, and the lattice detail at either side of the entrance has a definite South Pacific influence.

This house would be attractive with a rich brown dado, white walls and roof and a yellow doorway. Then, to complete the picture, yellow marguerites should be planted along the front.

F.W.J.

Excerpt from Williams' *New Homes For Today*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 50 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

The attached photographs have the following information in common:

- Historic District: Berkley Square
- Photographer: Diana Painter
- City/County/State: Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada

Below is the list of photographs by Photograph Number.

Photo No.	Property Address/View	Date
1	Streetscape – Leonard Avenue, looking east	2-2005
2	613 Leonard Ave.	2-2005
3	409 Leonard Ave.	2-2005
4	1636 G Street	2-2005
5	604 Freeman Ave.	2-2005
6	516 Freeman Ave.	2-2005
7	512 Freeman Ave.	2-2005
8	1643 E Street	2-2005
9	1654 D Street	2-2005
10	1654 E Street	2-2005
11	501 Wyatt Ave.	2-2005
12	601 Wyatt Ave.	2-2005
13	1654 G Street	2-2005
14	520 Wyatt Ave.	2-2005
15	500 Wyatt Ave.	2-2005
16	1682 D Street	2-2005
17	500 Byrnes Ave.	2-2005
18	612 Byrnes Ave.	2-2005

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 51 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

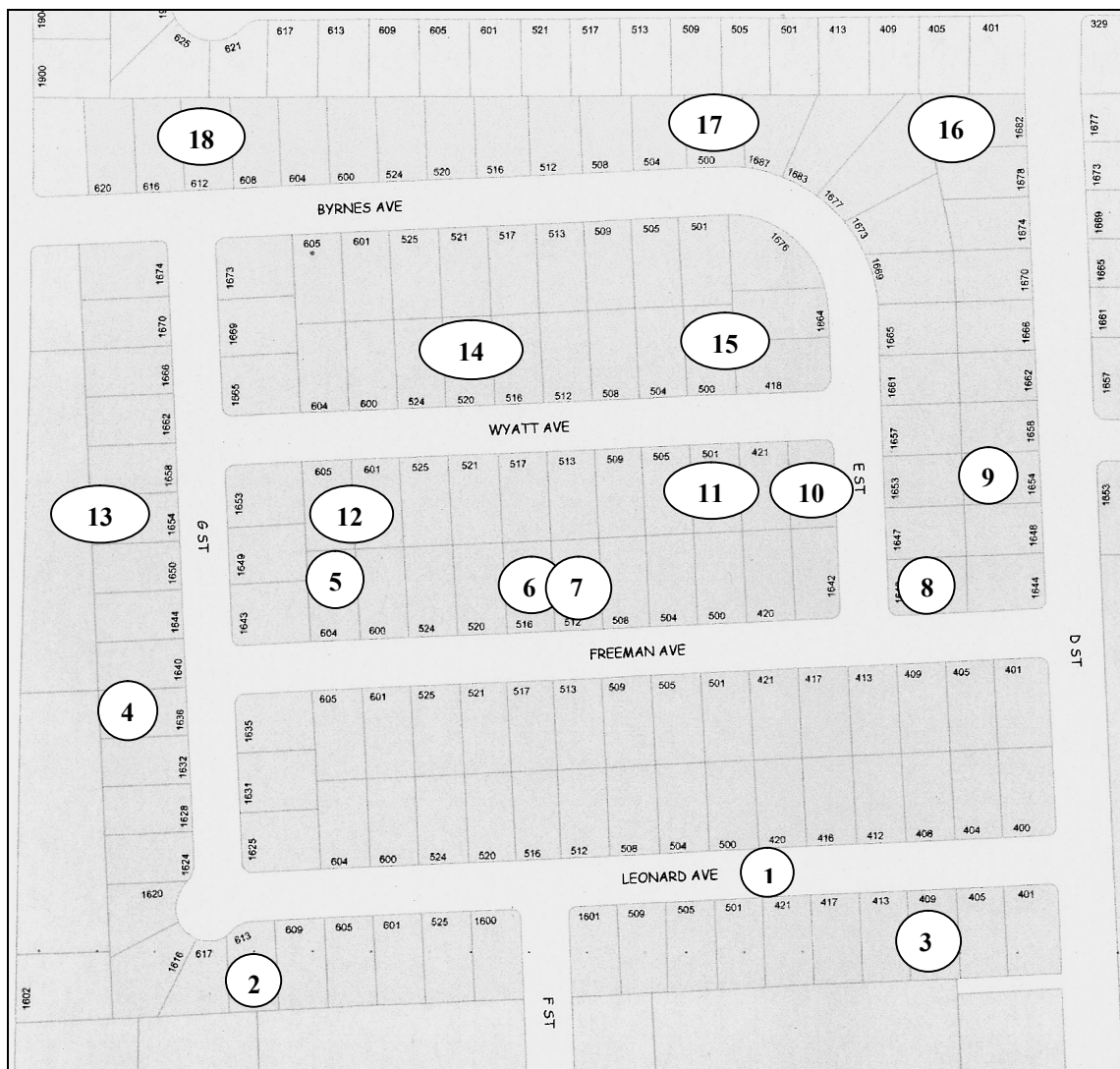


Photo reference map

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 52 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

Las Vegas SUN

July 25, 2007

History takes note of what black achievement built

By Joe Schoenmann

Las Vegas Sun

In a city that implodes landmark businesses for the sake of a face-lift and mow s down neighborhoods to make way for roads and stores, preserving what came before has always been an afterthought.

Few are the buildings that remain that hold a story to be told about the people who lived, worked and died there, the people who came long ago and built a life from the desert. We're still so new, you step into anything built in the 1950s and you're practically on hallowed ground.

Slowly, that mind-set is changing.

Berkley Square is just one example. In less than a year, and with the help of the Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission, the neighborhood - bound by Leonard and Byrnes avenues to the south and north, and by D and H streets to the east and west - is expected to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The commission will meet today to review the application before forwarding it to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Built in 1954-55, the neighborhood is thought to be the first development built and financed by African-Americans in Nevada, said Courtney Mooney, urban design coordinator for the city's Planning Department.

The neighborhood features 148 ranch-style homes designed by America's first preeminent black architect, Paul Revere Williams, who also designed the Los Angeles County Courthouse, Frank Sinatra's Trousdale Estate and the La Concha hotel, which was demolished to make way for development that remains on hold. Williams, who died in 1980, learned to draw upside down because he knew white clients would never sit next to him.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 53 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

For blacks living in Las Vegas, it was one of the first places they could call home.

Arthur Jordan, a retired principal, has lived in his home on Freeman Avenue since 1955. In the days shortly after he moved, entertainers such as Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, Eartha Kitt, Dorothy Dandridge and Sammy Davis Jr. performed in clubs such as the El Morocco or the Louisiana, four blocks south on Jackson Avenue.

"It was a lot of fun," Jordan said.

Plus, there were kids, maybe 40 or 50 of them, who'd walk and ride their bikes up and down the streets. It was a neighborhood that those who lived there - some of whom still do - held with much pride.

In the 1960s, things started to change, said Jordan's wife, Leona.

"That's when they started letting us buy houses on the other side of town," she said.

And over the years, many of those who lived there died. Now, many of the homes have absentee landlords. The saying that you'd never wash a rented car also applies to rented homes, where paint and upkeep on lawns means so much less if you're not the owner.

Today Jackson Avenue is the definition of blight, with dusty empty lots, a church or two, a casino you've never heard of and a tavern. For an hour Tuesday afternoon, even with the cooler air from an oncoming storm, there wasn't a child to be seen on Freeman Avenue.

Maybe with the historic designation, that will change.

"I'm hoping it will give this place some notice, lead to some beautification," said Ruth Eppenger-D'Hondt, president of the Berkley Square Neighborhood Association.

She lives with her husband, Roland, a few houses east of Jordan. Next door, her sister lives in the house her father, a Nevada Test Site worker for 30 years, bought in 1957.

"I want this to be an inviting place, not just for me but for somebody else, for those who come after me," Eppenger-D'Hondt said.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 54 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

In the mid-1950s, financing for the homes came in part from the neighborhood's namesake, Thomas L. Berkley, an Oakland, Calif., resident who became a developer, media owner, civil rights advocate and, according to an article written by Mooney for The Journal of Heritage Stewardship, "a frequent guest at the White House during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations."

The homes of Berkley Square have none of the sweeping archways of La Concha, but Epp enger-D'Hondt said they were built sturdily and with a mind toward the necessities of everyday living. Her home is the very picture of immaculate, with a perfectly landscaped desert scene in the back yard, where a waterfall gently gurgles into a koi pond.

If the neighborhood gets its historic designation, it will be only the second to do so in Las Vegas. The first was John S. Park, a several-block area roughly southeast of the intersection of Las Vegas and Charleston boulevards. In 2003 it became the first neighborhood to be placed on the Las Vegas Historic Property Register, as well as the national register.

As with that neighborhood, which has seen an influx of academics and parents, and blue-collar and white-collar workers who have melded well with homeowners who have lived there for decades, Epp enger-D'Hondt hopes revitalization is on its way for Berkley Square.

"This is not just a place to go and say, 'I stay there,' " she said, holding on to the wall between her home and her sister's home.

"To me, it's a place where people have a community connection, something many people have forgotten as they go for bigger houses, always reaching for more."

*Joe Schoenmann can be reached at 229-6436 or at
joe.schoenmann@lasvegassun.com.*

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 55 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada



Strategic Urban Development Alliance, LLC

Real Estate Development ♦ Construction Project Management ♦ Project Finance Solutions



Remembering Thomas L. Berkley

1915 - 2001

Athlete, Lawyer, Publisher, Port Commissioner

In many ways, the exciting developments of Thomas L. Berkley Square – which will be home to the North Alameda County Self Sufficiency Center – are due to the vision and continuing legacy of Mr. Thomas L. Berkley.

A gifted academic and world-class track and field athlete, Mr. Berkley graduated from University of California at Los Angeles in 1938. He later attended both Boalt Hall, and Hastings School of Law, receiving a Doctorate of Law degree in 1942. With law degree in hand, he quickly established himself as a champion of the rights of the underprivileged through his work as an attorney, and later as a successful entrepreneur.

Shortly after the end of WWII, Mr. Berkley established the law firm Thomas Berkley & Associates, in Berkeley, California. In addition to its well earned reputation, TB&A is also celebrated for being the largest racially integrated, bilingual law firm in the United States.

Initially comprised of a core team of attorneys that included Terry Francois, Joseph Kennedy and Clifton White, scores of talented attorney's would learn the ropes under Mr. Berkley's leadership and go on to have distinguished law careers around the world.

In 1972 Mr. Berkley purchased a 35,000 square foot building in Oakland and moved his various legal and business operations to the location at 630 20th Street.

Fluent in Spanish, Mr. Berkley served as founder, publisher and editor of the Post Newspaper Group, a chain of five tri-weekly English and Spanish newspapers. This chain included El Mundo, the largest Spanish newspaper in the state. Mr. Berkley is also credited for co-founding the West Coast Black

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number *Additional Documentation*
Page 56 of 56

Berkley Square
Clark County, Nevada

Publisher's Association.

In addition to Mr. Berkley's ground breaking law practice, he was also active in the construction industry as a developer/builder of commercial and residential projects that included housing developments, shopping centers, and apartment complexes in Northern and Central California, and Nevada. In 1955 he created a racially integrated 250-unit housing development in Las Vegas - aptly named Berkley Square.

Mr. Berkley served 11 years as a member of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of Oakland, and two terms as its President. He was the nation's first African-American to serve as a commissioner of a major Port. Mr. Berkley would play a pivotal role in converting the Port of Oakland to a container Port. His innovative leadership - increased use of container cranes, helping to revolutionize the manner in which cargo is handled worldwide.

Source: <http://sudallc.com/Thomas%20L.%20Berkley.htm>